



The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

October 19, 2021

Dear Prime Minister:

RE: Prioritizing Drug Policy for Incoming Cabinet Members

As you well know, **almost 23,000 people have died from an opioid overdose between January 2016 and March 2021**, fueled by a contaminated drug supply and the stigma associated with drug use that is reinforced by the criminalization of drugs and of people who use them. Each day that goes by under a regime of criminal prohibition is a day in which government policy contributes to the often-deadly stigma surrounding drug use. The time to decriminalize drugs is long overdue.

Public support for drug decriminalization is growing. Earlier this year, a nationwide poll found close to 60 per cent of respondents and a majority in every province favoured removing criminal penalties for personal drug possession. Last year, almost 200 organizations Canada-wide supported a call to key ministers in the federal government to immediately decriminalize simple drug possession.

In the weeks preceding the recent election, the Liberal Party of Canada stated that a “re-elected Liberal government will continue to take an evidence-based approach to problematic substance use so that Canadians have access to the care and support they need.” **As the leader of a newly elected federal government, you have a chance to make a difference.**

We urge you to prioritize evidence-based drug policy in your new mandate, and to include drug policy reform in the mandates of your new Cabinet, including the mandates of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Public Safety, and given the disproportionate impact of punitive drug policy on Indigenous Peoples, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. **At minimum, their mandate letters should include a commitment to:**

- **Immediately decriminalize drug possession across Canada and eliminate all criminal sanctions and penalties related to drug use, in consultation with people who use drugs; and**
- **Clear support for and resources to facilitate nationwide, low-barrier access to safe supply.**

There is no time to waste, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate the ongoing public health crises of drug toxicity injuries and deaths, on top of the still unresolved HIV and HCV pandemics, among other harms.

Yours sincerely,

Association des intervenants en dépendance du Québec (AIDQ)

Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs/ Association canadienne des personnes qui utilisent des drogues

Canadian Drug Policy Coalition/ Coalition Canadienne des politiques sur les drogues

HIV Legal Network/ Réseau juridique VIH

List of Signatories:

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HIV Legal Network/ Réseau juridique VIH

Action Hepatitis Canada/ Action Hépatites Canada
Adojeune
AIDS Committee of Durham Region/ Le Comité du SIDA de la région de Durham
AIDS New Brunswick/ SIDA Nouveau-Brunswick
AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador
AlterHéros
Association québécoise des centres d'intervention en dépendance (AQCID)
Association Québécoise pour la promotion de la santé des personnes utilisatrices de drogues (AQPSUD)
AVI Health and Community Services/ AVI Services de santé et communautaires
BC Civil Liberties Association/ Association des libertés civiles de la Colombie-Britannique
Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network)
CACTUS Montréal
Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies/ Association canadienne des sociétés Elizabeth Fry
Canadian Association of Social Workers/ Association canadienne des travailleuses et travailleurs sociaux
Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy/ Étudiant.es canadien.es pour les politiques éclairées sur les substances psychoactives
CATIE
Centre associatif polyvalent d'aide hépatite C (CAPAHC)
Centre d'intervention le Rond-Point
Centre des R.O.S.É.S. de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue
Centre le S.P.O.T.
Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-SIDA)
Confronting the Stigma of Drug Addiction
Criminalization and Punishment Education Project/ Projet de sensibilisation sur la criminalisation et la sanction
The Dispensary Community Health Centre/ Le DISPENSAIRE - Centre de santé communautaire
Doctors of the World Canada/ Médecins du Monde Canada
Dopamine
Drug User Liberation Front
EACH+EVERY: Businesses for Harm Reduction/ EACH+EVERY: Entreprises pour la réduction des méfaits
East Kootenary Network & Society of People Who Use Drugs
Élixir
Groupe d'entraide à l'intention des personnes séropositives et itinérants (GEIPSI)
Groupe de recherche et d'intervention psychosociale (GRIP)
Groupe Harmonie
Hamilton Community Legal Clinic/ Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton
HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)
Institut universitaire sur les dépendances (IUD)
IRIS Estrie
John Howard Society of Simcoe & Muskoka/ Société John Howard de Simcoe et Muskoka
Logis Phare
Méta d'Âme
Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH)
Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies Canada
National Association of Women and the Law/ Association nationale Femmes et Droit
Northreach Society
Ottawa Inner City Health
PAN - Pacific AIDS Network
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre
PASAN
PHS Community Services Society
Positive Pathways Community Services
Prisoners' Legal Services

Réseau SOLIDARITÉ itinérance du Québec

(RÉ)SO 16-35

RÉZO, santé et mieux-être des hommes gais et bisexuels, cis et trans

Ryan's Hope/ L'espoir de Ryan

Sandy Hill Community Health Centre/ Centre De Santé Communautaire Côte De Sable

School of Social Work (UQAM) / École de travail social, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM)

Shining Waters Regional Council

Somerset West Community Health Centre/ Centre de santé communautaire Somerset Ouest

South Riverdale Community Health Centre

Table des organismes communautaires montréalais de lutte contre le sida (TOMS)

Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project

Walgwan Center/Centre Walgwan